



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

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RICHMOND, VA 23219

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Women Marines Association*

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VNGA

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Position Paper 2020-04 Virginia National Guard Emergency Response Pay

OBJECTIVE: To ensure Virginia's continued commitment to the men and women of the Virginia National Guard, through raising the minimum National Guard Emergency Response Pay (ERP) to equal the currently used DOD pay table plus a 2-10% increased adjustment, depending on rank.

BACKGROUND:

1. During state emergencies, Guardsmen are brought into an Emergency Response role as temporary state employees at a very low pay band.
2. Other state employees involved in emergency response work overtime and go home or to a hotel, however, Guardsmen on duty are not eligible for overtime pay, put in 12-18 hours per day, and are typically quartered in austere conditions such as an armory or tent.
3. Since January 2014, the VNG has mobilized 2,570 personnel to respond to hurricanes, winter storms and flooding, often with only 12 hours to report for Emergency Response duty.

DISCUSSION:

1. During the Charlottesville "Unite the Right" Protests in August 2017, Guardsmen stood side-by-side with Virginia State Police, in extremely stressful and challenging conditions, and were woefully undercompensated compared to the state police.
2. While in an Emergency Response capacity, Guardsmen are often forced to use vacation time or take leave without pay from their civilian jobs when military leave runs out, and most employers do not supplement the pay difference.
3. Current Emergency Response pay amounts are determined by DOD pay tables. An E-1 VNG Soldier/Airman earns about \$89.75 per day, before taxes, which on a 12-hour shift equals \$7.48 per hour – less than the federal minimum wage.
4. When Guardsmen are federally activated they receive hazard pay, separation pay, housing allowance and other allowances dependent on their circumstances. When Guardsmen are activated by the Governor they only receive their base pay, housing, and meal allowance, all of which are taxed.
5. It is essential that Guardsmen are compensated at a reasonable rate to promote a positive work environment when conducting critical, emergency response missions to send the message to Guardsmen that their efforts are valued equally to other emergency response agencies.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate budget and legislative support to ensure that all Virginia National Guardsmen receive a 2-10% adjustment to the current pay table for NG Emergency Response Pay.